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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9271
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3768
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9979
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2234
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4382
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0260
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0910
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0308
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0225
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0237
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3964
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2349
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1005

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: UZBEK PRIME MINISTER REPLACED

Classified By: P/E Chief Ted Burkhalter; reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) Independent website Uzmtronom reported late on February 21 that Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyaev has been removed as Prime Minister and will assume duties as Hokim (governor) of Ferghana Province. First Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov will assume duties as acting Prime Minister. The announcement has not yet hit the official press agencies but likely will either Friday or Saturday. President Karimov is reportedly headed to Ferghana over the weekend for a meeting of the Ferghana regional legislative assembly, during which time an announcement is likely.

¶2. (C) Mirziyaev has been rumored for the past half year to be on his way out, though in November he seemed to have recovered his standing. His fall from power by no means entails disgrace. Former Prime Minister Utkir Sultanov, who was replaced in 2003, then spent three years as a Deputy Prime Minister before moving on to head the TAPoich aircraft manufacturing plant (Karimov's own alma mater).

¶3. (C) Azimov's star is clearly on the rise. He was out of favor from 2003-2005 or so, following his role as a major booster of the disastrous 2003 EBRD annual meeting held in Tashkent. He has regained favor in the past two years and was named last month as First Deputy Prime Minister. He has arguably been among the most powerful cabinet ministers for the past year. Whether he will remain as Prime Minister, we do not know. He is widely seen as a promising figure for U.S.-Uzbek relations, and he is thought to be a promoter of sounder economic policies. He is a political survivor, though, who will likely keep his own message in line with Karimov's.
NORLAND